The Rev. John Reid, rector of nearby St. Lukes Church was engaged as the first teacher of the Elizabeth Smith School, and it existed until the time of the American Revolution, after which no teacher could be obtained conformable to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England.

## Guardian Accounts of the 18th Century

An important function of the County Courts of Colonial Virginia was their jurisdiction over orphans' estates. Special sessions of these courts were held for the purpose of passing on these accounts. Guardians were required by law to report at least once a year as to the property under their care.

Many of these Isle of Wight records have been preserved and clearly indicate the interest the citizens had in schooling and throw some light on the early schools of the County. Book "A" of the Isle of Wight County Records is a veritable treasury for the history for the schooling of Isle of Wight orphans. Only a limited number of the many recorded can be mentioned here.

On September 1, 1742 an account was rendered of the Joseph Bridger estate. Among the items are the payments of one pound, four shillings, six pence to the master of the grammar school; the same amount to the master of the writing school; but four pounds, six shillings to the master of the dancing school.

Arthur Smith, presumedly Arthur Smith IV, of Smithfield

was guardian of this account. Joseph Bridger undoubtedly is the same Joseph Bridger mentioned above in the indenture making possible the Elizabeth Smith School. There is uncertainty as to the Braffington School; some say it was a school in Isle of Wight County; others, it was a part of the College of William and Mary College.

Joseph Wright filed his report on December 28, 1743 as to the estate of James Benn, orphan. This account shows a payment of four pounds for schooling, and seventeen shillings, seven pence for books and paper. The same guardian later filed an account for another child, George Benn, in which was an item for clothing, schooling and books, ten years, sixteen pounds, fifteen shillings, four pence.

The estate of Mary Woodword paid one pound, nine pence for schooling and books; for one year's boarding and schooling there was a charge of six pounds against the estate of Thomas White; Nicholas Smith on September 6, 1750 paid Ben Willett seventeen shillings for schooling; and John Mallory, guardian for the John Day estate paid the administrator of the estate of M. C. Walker for schooling four pounds, twelve shillings. Mr. Mallory in the same account shows payments of three shillings, six pence for one Rudiman's Grammar and of two pounds, ten shillings paid Mr. Reid, first teacher of the Elizabeth Smith School.

On December 5, 1756 the estate of Arthur Smith, orphan

of Thomas Smith, also paid John Reid two pounds, ten shillings for six months schooling. In 1758-1759 the Rev. John Agnew was paid twenty-one pounds, eight shillings and eleven pence for schooling and books; John Reid was paid nine shillings for schooling; John Hodges in August 1762 was paid one pound for a year's schooling of James Wheadon.

The estate of James Tooke Scott through William Hollowde paid from January 1762 to August 1765 for the following items: one quire of paper, one shilling; one-half quire of paper, nine pence; one slate, eight pence; schooling, eight months, one pound, ten shillings. Ann Murray, guardian of the William Glover estate reported boarding and schooling Benjamine three pounds, one shilling, five pence; Robert, eight shillings, ten pence; Ann, eight shillings, ten pence.

There is an interesting item in the will of John Gray. On April 30, 1753, James Baker, Lawrence Baker and Richard Hardy were appointed by the Court to examine the account rendered in the execution of the will. In the report to the Court there was an item "to bringing up and maintaining six children and five young Negroes from the time of John Gray's death in clothes and board and victuals and schooling them - fifty pounds."

The gentlemen appointed by the Court to examine the whole account reported:

"We have examined and stated the above accounts

> as far as it relates to any charges in the said account except the last of bringing up the children and Negroes, which said charge appears to us to be very reasonable - but we humbly the same to be determined by the Worshipful Court." The Court very likely so determined as there was an order on May 3, 1753, that the same be entered.

The account of John Pitt, orphan, shows seven pounds paid in 1765 for boarding and schooling and later there was paid one pound to Robert Driver for one year's schooling of Thomas Pitt.

Even after the American Revolution records of accounts show payments for schooling of children. David Williams, the Elder, in his estate account rendered April 1, 1800 shows payment for schooling of three children, and in July of the same year the Thomas Smith estate paid for the schooling of three other children.

The Guardian Accounts clearly indicate that the orphan children in Isle of Wight County were being taught by someone; that these teachers were being paid regular tuition. Several teachers were named. At least two of these were preachers, John Reid and John Agnew. Names of some of the other teachers given were Ben Willett, Edward Stagg, William Salter, Mr. Evans, John Richmond, Robert Driver and M. C. Walker. All of the teachers mentioned in the accounts were male teachers, and it is concluded that there were no female teachers in the 17th and 18th century schools of Isle of Wight County.

The accounts also indicate that girls as well as boys

were schooled. In the account of the Nicholas Bradshaw estate ten pounds was paid for nursing, bringing up and schooling Elizabeth. Ten shillings was paid for the schooling of Ann Glover. Nineteen and a half months of schooling was charged for Ann Proctor. Rachel Chapman and Sarah Summerell were other girls for whom tuition was provided.

From the above accounts paid for schooling apparently the rate of tuition was approximately one and a half shillings a month or thirty-eight cents in modern currency. We must remember, though, that the same amount of currency in those days would purchase considerably more commodities than in our day.

Bruce in his Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century gives an account of the executor of the estate of an Isle of Wight schoolmaster. Altogether this account totaled twenty-one hundred and thirty-nine pounds of tobacco, and as the author says, was "large enough to have permitted the schoolmaster to buy considerable property." The tuition charged in the accounts averaged seventeen pounds of tobacco a month for schooling, three months for fifty pounds of the commodity then used widely for currency. The list of debtors shows eighteen patrons and twenty pupils. Judging from the number of unpaid accounts this schoolmaster must have had a good sized school.

## Early Curriculum

The early records of Isle of Wight County give us very little light on the curriculum of the schools of that period. The Joseph Bridger account indicates that writing was one of the subjects, and also there was a division of the school known as the grammar school. Many of the accounts mention payment for books; the Mary Woodword shows an item for one, Rudiman's Grammar, this likely a Latin Grammar. The James Tooke Scott account shows payment of eight pence for a slate; Robert Tynes in the record of July 5, 1754 was paid six shillings and six pence for a Bible and a Spelling book. Arthur Smith I in his will written in 1645 expressed the desire that his children be brought up "in the fear of God and to learn to read;" and the provisions of the Elizabeth School that the boys should be taught reading, writing and arithmetic and the girls only reading and writing. It is therefore concluded that the curriculum in the early schools embraced only the "three R's" with the possibility some tuition in Latin and Greek in a few of the better private schools. Some dancing also might have been offered.

Bruce quotes Beverley's History of Virginia "the people join and build schools for their children, where they may learn on very easy terms." Many of the schoolmasters of Isle of Wight County had such schools.

Dr. Lyon G. Tyler in his article "Education in Colonial

Virginia" stated that there were several small free schools of very old standing during the seventeenth century in Isle of Wight County. The learned Virginia historian gave as evidence the report in 1724 of the Reverend Thomas Bailey to the Bishop of London in which the statement was made that Messrs. Hurst, Irons, Gills and Reynolds were the masters of the four schools, all of which were located in the Lower, or Newport Parish of the County. Dr. Tyler suggested that one of these schools resulted from the will of Captain John Moon, and that another resulted from Henry King's bequest. He could suggest no evidence as to where the other two schools might have been located.

The early schools of Isle of Wight County were supported by private means. Teachers in these schools were licensed by the Governor of the Colony usually upon the recommendation of the County Court.

There is no evidence to indicate how extensive were the schools of the Colonial period. At best only a few children could have been instructed in the free schools existing. The private or field schools of that day naturally could not enroll all of the children left after the free schools had reached their quotas.

## Illiteracy

Bruce in his Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century gives figures to indicate the illiteracy

in Isle of Wight County and thirteen other counties of the 1643-1700 period.

For the period mentioned Bruce found in the Isle of Wight County records that only fifty-eight percent of the 719 men executing deeds and dispositions wrote their names. A study of the contemporary records in fourteen counties, including Isle of Wight, revealed that fifty-nine percent of 12,445 men signed their names, the others making their marks. Bruce discovered that of the ninety-six jurymen only forty-four percent signed the entries. In a like survey of nine counties including Isle of Wight he found that of 2160 serving as jurymen, 1166, or approximately one half, signed their names. He also determined that only 185 of the 438 names to the "Grievances of 1676" were signatures, the others making their marks.

Illiteracy was even greater among the women than among the men. Bruce examined deeds and dispositions to which were attached the names of 189 Isle of Wight Colonial women. He found that only twenty, or about ten percent, wrote their names. In the fourteen counties studied he ascertained that only 756 of 3066 women wrote out their signatures.

It can be assumed that persons possessing real estate and those called upon for jury service or for dispositions were the more literate of the population. Therefore a high percent of illiteracy must have prevailed in Isle of Wight

and other Colonial counties.

## Indian Education

Attempts to overcome illiteracy were extended to the Indians as well as to the white population. An original deed is preserved in the Clerk's Office of Isle of Wight County indicating that one of the Nottoway Indians could write his name. The deed was recorded in 1737 and conveyed a tract of land from King Edmonds and other chief men of his tribe to John Simmons and others of Isle of Wight. The king and several of the chief men made their marks, but one Indian, significantly named Robert Scholar, wrote out his signature.

## Summary

Notwithstanding the apparent high rate of illiteracy there were many signs that colonial Isle of Wight County was interested in schooling for its children. The many wills probated with provision for tuition of orphans show that Isle of Wight men appreciated the value of education. The several wills providing for free schools clearly manifested a broadening desire and interest in universal education. Such men as Benjamin Syms, Capt. John Moon, Henry King, Arthur Smith II, Charles Fulgham, and such a woman as Elizabeth Smith were great benefactors in the beginnings of schooling in the County of Isle of Wight.

# CHAPTER II

# TRANSITION FROM PRIVATE AND ENDOWED SCHOOLS TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The American Revolution brought an end to the Elizabeth Smith School as well as to some other Old World influences in Virginia education. The time had come for the American pioneer to blaze an educational trail. Educational pioneers in New England had made a much better start on public education than had been made in the South. Virginia, nevertheless, had in Thomas Jefferson the greatest apostle of public education in the New World. The Old Dominion, however, was slow in putting into effect Jefferson's democratic ideals in education.

## Thomas Jefferson's Ideal

In 1779 Thomas Jefferson introduced his famous bill in the Legislature of Virginia "for a more general diffusion of knowledge," which not only embodied a creditable plan for a public school system but was also the first effort made for the establishment of public schools in America. Jefferson would have had divided counties into hundreds of such convenient size that children might easily attend schools therein. Electors of the hundreds would have selected sites for school houses. The school houses would have been built, kept in repair, and looked after by three county aldermen. The aldermen would have been elected by a vote of the people. All

children, male and female, would have received free tuition for the term of three years, and could have attended school longer at their expense. Reading, writing and common arithmetic were to be taught from books, which should at the same time acquaint the children with Greek, Roman and American history. An overseer, eminent for his learning, integrity and fidelity to the Commonwealth, would have been appointed by the County aldermen to "superintend every ten schools." His duties would have been also to appoint teachers, examine pupils, visit and have general control over the schools. The salaries of the teachers and all other expenses connected with the schools would have been provided by the hundred "in such manner as other county expenses are by law provided." Two or more counties could form a district, and a grammar school was to be established and equipped with one hundred acres of land with dormitory space provided. The expenses of these grammar schools would have been cared for by the public treasury. Latin, Greek, English grammar, geography, and the higher parts of numerical arithmetic would have constituted the curriculum. A Visitor was to be appointed with like powers over the upper schools as the Superintendents had over the hundreds. The most promising graduates of the grammar schools, according to the idealistic bill of Mr. Jefferson, would have received higher education at the College of William and Mary at the expense of the State.

The bill was received with interest by the Virginia Legislature, but nothing was done. Virginia had just passed through a devastating war for freedom; the influence of the Church schools was still powerful; the large planters and aristocrats did not favor such a system; and the power of the great middle class of Virginia people had not begun to be felt in educational matters. And so, notwithstanding, Jefferson's vision, a system of public schools for Virginia, had to wait another hundred years.

The Virginia Assembly set up a permissive and discretionary plan for public schools in 1796, but there was a "joker" in the bill whereby local courts had to pass on the plan. Inasmuch as the courts were controlled by the landed and aristocratic class, no Virginia county adopted the plan.

## The Literary Fund

The Literary Fund of Virginia had its creation in 1810. In 1817 Governor Preston urged that a part of this Literary Fund be used for the education of poor children. As a consequence the Virginia Assembly in 1818 inaugurated the so-called "pauper school system of Virginia."

## Old Field Schools

From the time of the American Revolution until the second decade of the nineteenth century the children of Isle of Wight County, and other counties in the State as well, were

dependent either on the old field schools or a tutorial system for their education. The old field schools were a continuation of the schoolmaster schools of the Colonial period. These schools were usually made up of children in a community in which the people would agree to employ a teacher. The cost of this teacher was borne by the families sending children to this school. Instruction was given in reading, writing, and ciphering, and sometimes the higher branches. In the tutorial system a teacher was employed by one or two families with a more select group of children to be taught, and with special attention to preparing the children for college. For the old field schools a building was erected in a field not cultivated while the tutorial system utilized part of the home for classes. Gradually there evolved the academy, a more pretentious institution than the field schools. These academies generally were established by private subscription. They were intended to supplement the work done in the field schools and to replace the higher instruction afforded a few children by the tutorial system. It may be said that these academies were the high schools of the nineteenth century.

Although no records are available of the old field schools in the rural sections of Isle of Wight County there is a fairly good account of this type of school as conducted in the Town of Smithfield. Soon after the inauguration of the public schools provided by the Virginia Constitution of 1869,

Dr. John Purdie of Smithfield prepared a historical sketch of the Smithfield schools for County Superintendent Morrison. This history was preserved in the Minute Book of the County School Board and affords first-hand information of the schools in Smithfield from the time of the American Revolution to the beginning of the War Between the States.

## Schools in Smithfield

### Gordon School

Soon after the Treaty of Peace ending the Revolution four residents of Smithfield; William Taylor, Thomas Pierce, Lawrence Baker and George Purdie established a school and employed a Scotsman by the name of Gordon as the teacher of the school. According to Dr. Purdie, who was a grandson of George Purdie, one of the founders of the school, Gordon was a man of high classical and musical attainment. The number of pupils in the Gordon School was limited to fifteen. Rules for the school were rigidly enforced. Daily and evening responses were required of the pupils except on Sunday and Saturday afternoon, which was observed as a holiday, contingent on good behavior. The annual vacations of the school were: two days at Easter, including Good Friday; one day at Whitsuntide; two weeks beginning August 15th; and one week at Christmas. One of the terms of the contract with the teacher was that he should board with his four employers, alternating three months at the home of each. Dr. Purdie

stated that the information about the Gordon School was obtained from Dr. Purdie's father, who was a student at the school until he left to continue his education at Geneva, Switzerland. Another pupil mentioned in the Gordon School was the late Judge B. Taylor of Norfolk. Mr. Gordon was in charge of the school until his death, approximated between 1790 and 1795.

Burgess School

After the death of Gordon, the Reverend Henry Burgess opened a school in Smithfield, but closed it to accept the principalship of the then flourishing Millfield Academy located near the Isle of Wight County line, but in Southampton County.

The Millfield Academy

One of the first attempts of the people of Isle of Wight County to secure higher education than that afforded by the old field schools, or the tutorial system, was the Millfield Academy. The General Assembly of Virginia on December 20, 1790 enacted:

> "That it shall be lawful for John S. Wills, Benjamin Blount, William Urquhart, John Taylor, Francis Boykins, George Purdie, James Wills, and Samuel Kello to raise by one or more lotteries, a sum not to exceed three hundred pounds, to be of them applied towards erecting an academy in the County of Southampton, which shall be called by the name of Millfield Academy."

Several of these men were citizens of Isle of Wight County, notably Francis Boykins, donor of the present Courthouse site; John S. Wills, one-time sheriff of the County, and a Revolutionary hero; George Purdie, grandfather of Dr. John Purdie and merchant of the Town of Smithfield before the Revolution; and James Wills, vestryman of St. Luke's Church in 1780. It is therefore concluded that Millfield Academy was established to furnish education to the residents of Isle of Wight County as well as the adjoining County of Southampton.

Millfield Academy, described as a flourishing and well-conducted seminary, was located on the main road leading from Jerusalem (now Courtland) in Southampton County to Smithfield in Isle of Wight County. It was situated fourteen miles from Jerusalem, the Southampton County seat, and eighteen miles from Smithfield, then location of the Isle of Wight County Courthouse. The course of study was said to have been quite extensive for its day, embracing all the higher branches of science and literature taught in schools of the first class. In 1835 it had over fifty pupils, some of them from adjacent counties and neighboring States. A president and eighteen trustees were in control. Among its students was President William H. Harrison.

Conveniently situated as it was to Isle of Wight County and with at least four Isle of Wight men on the original board,

it is to be expected that some boys and girls from this County journeyed to Millfield Academy for work more advanced than that offered in the field schools, or by private tutors, or in the growing number of local private schools.

## The Bowden and Shields Schools

After the Reverend Burgess left the Smithfield School about 1795 to assume his duties at the Millfield Academy, a teacher by the name of Bowden opened a school in Smithfield. Dr. Purdie was unable to tell what branches were taught in this school, but presumed that the curriculum embraced only the elementary subjects. The number of pupils in the Bowden School is also unknown.

About 1810 Hamilton Shields became the teacher of the Smithfield Town School. Dr. Purdie states that advanced subjects such as Greek, Latin and Mathematics were added to the curriculum through which many distinguished men of Isle of Wight and other counties passed. Mr. Shields is described as having been a man of culture and learning and well-qualified to instruct. Students of the school, however, complained of his severe discipline, tyrannical government, and cruel system of corporal punishment. Pupils were given excessive punishment for trivial faults or deficiencies. Yet his classes attracted pupils from Southampton, Surry and Nansemond Counties. With the declaration of war in 1812 Hamilton Shields left Smithfield in command of a volunteer company of riflemen

and the school was closed. When the war was concluded instead of returning to his duties as a teacher in Smithfield, he went to Norfolk and there established the Norfolk Beacon, a paper he edited until his death.

## The Mitchell and Dunn Schools

The next school opened in Smithfield, according to Dr. Purdie, was that of a Mr. James Mitchell, who, in 1816, opened a school in the old Boykins' residence. This school had upper and lower sections. The sister of Mitchell conducted the lower school in which she taught the smaller children, while Mitchell instructed in the Ancient languages and Mathematics. This man was highly educated and trained as a teacher and musician. The school had a large attendance of pupils from ten to twenty years of age. For some unknown reason Mitchell abandoned his school and departed after a year's stay in Smithfield.

Martin Dunn, described as a recent Irish immigrant, succeeded James Mitchell as schoolmaster. This Irishman was in charge of the school when Dr. Purdie was enrolled as a pupil on January 1, 1817.

In writing of his entrance to school Dr. Purdie states that he was six years and six months old; that his father and older sister had given him a rigid home schooling; that when he entered school he was well acquainted with Latin grammar and able to read Caesar. He furthermore asserted that he

could answer every question in Rudiman's Rudiments of Latin Grammar. He declared that never in his life had he recited a lesson in English grammar and that all of the principles of grammar he possessed had been obtained from a study of the Latin, Greek and French, and an association with those who correctly spoke English.

Martin Dunn, in whose school this precocious pupil enrolled, conducted his classes with severe discipline. The instrument of punishment was a stout leather whip, fixed in a wooden handle. The free end of the whip was of heavy thongs about a foot in length with knots in the ends of them. In the hands of Dunn, "physically a Hercules," the whip became a weapon of torture. The early historian of Isle of Wight Education tells that Dunn was also fond of his cups and sometimes excitable. Likely it was on one of these occassions that he slapped the face of a youth of seventeen whose irate father probably hastened the departure of Teacher Dunn after nine months in the Smithfield School.

There were two other schools in session about the time of Martin Dunn. One of these was opened by Joseph B. Whitehead and became a rival of the Dunn School, this rivalry often being carried to quarrels and fights between the boys of the two schools. Mrs. James Deford, one of the sisters of James Mitchell, also opened a school for small children.

## The Simon Patrick Walton School

Following Martin Dunn, and probably engaged by him as a substitute, came another Irishman, Simon Patrick Walton to take charge of the main Smithfield school.

Soon after the arrival of Walton in 1817, the citizens of the Town and County organized a company for the establishment of a high school in Smithfield. The organization had a president, a treasurer, a secretary, and a board of trustees.

Rules and regulations were adopted by the Company for the governing of the school. The rules and regulations of the school were read by the pupils on alternate Monday mornings. Morning and afternoon sessions were held five days to the week, and the school year ran similarly to the first school established in Smithfield. The maximum number of pupils was placed at twenty, and the fees fixed at $30.00 to $40.00 per annum payable quarterly in advance.

Mr. Walton's teaching and management of the school was so satisfactory that in 1818 he was elected Principal of the school, that year conducted in the residence of C. M. Hayden. The patrons were so well pleased with the way the school was handled and the Company so well satisfied with Walton's management that it was decided to dissolve the Board of Trustees and place the school under the individual control of the Principal. He was to conduct it as a private school for boys and girls and to make such rules and regulations as he thought necessary.

The popularity and success of the teacher brought so many requests for admission as to make it necessary to employ an assistant. James M. Jordan, John O'Brien and Joel Holloman, later a Congressman, were named by Dr. Purdie to occupy at different times the position of assistant principal of the Walton School. The duties of the assistant were confined to teaching the girls and such boys carrying work only through the English branches.

The Walton School attracted students not only from the Town of Smithfield and other parts of Isle of Wight County, but also from southside Virginia counties and the cities of Norfolk and Petersburg. Boys made up the student body for the most part, although there were some girls enrolled annually.

Walton did not employ the cruel and severe discipline that prevailed in the school of Martin Dunn. Dr. Purdie stated, however, that when its use was essential for order, it was not spared.

There were no special buildings erected for school purposes in Smithfield for the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Schools were held in private residences or unoccupied buildings, arrangements being made with the owner for the rent to be paid. The old Elizabeth Smith school building, which had passed into the possession of the Smithfield Masons, was used by Walton around 1820, when he conducted classes on the lower floor of this building. In addition to

residences already named, the homes of Captain Charles.F. Chalmers and Dr. John R. Purdie were used for school house purposes.

The Smithfield Academy

The success of the Walton private high school and the numerous academies established in Virginia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century probably made Smithfield "academy conscious." Subscription books were opened again to raise a fund with which not only to operate a school, but with which to purchase a lot and erect thereon an academy building. The Smithfield citizens were successful and the Virginia Assembly of 1829 incorporated the Smithfield Academy and constituted the following men of the County of Isle of Wight as trustees: Robert Butler, George Wilson, John Womble, Arthur Smith, Willis H. Woodley, Joel Holleman, William H. Day, Mallory H. Todd, and Archibald Atkinson. A committee with Col. Willis H. Woodley was appointed to select a lot and erect the building. Lot No. 28 on Mason Street in the Town of Smithfield was purchased and a two story brick building constructed. This building was approximately one hundred feet away from and on the same side of the street as the Elizabeth Smith school building.

A. J. Morrison, in his Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia 1776-1860 quotes Martin in the following description of Smithfield Academy:

> "Smithfield Academy: Isle of Wight County: A large male and female academy in which are taught all the branches of polite education, four other schools containing generally one hundred and fifty pupils, jointly, children being sent here to attend school from the surrounding county, and some from great distances in consequence of the healthiness of the place. This Academy, a brick building of two large rooms, one upstairs, the other down, was incorporated in 1829, and kept in constant and successful operation until 1861."

The Smithfield Academy occupied its new building in 1828, but not before a contention over the principalship. The popular and efficient Walton, then conducting his school in the Elizabeth Smith building only a short distance from the new building, was nominated for the position. Friends on the Board of Trustees also nominated the Reverend G. H. Jones, Rector of Newport Parish, for the principalship. Purdie says that the followers of each worked vigorously and an animated and close contest resulted in Mr. Walton being elected over the rector of the strong Episcopal parish. Just a few weeks, however, before the opening of the Smithfield Academy, Mr. Walton died. Dr. Purdie in speaking of this teacher says "he was a faithful servant, a ripe and good scholar, and an accomplished musician." Under the instruction of Principal Walton the first band was organized, and performed in public. This was over one hundred years before the present Smithfield band, the first in the County, was instituted.

Dr. Purdie thought that the Reverend Jones succeeded Walton as principal of the Smithfield Academy, which continued

its operation until the outbreak of the War between the States. He lists as other principals of the Smithfield Academy: Q. N. Stoddard, W. W. Day, Jno. S. Stubbs, Clayton G. Coleman, James R. Garlick, George R. Atkinson, R. M. Casey, Samuel Moore and a Mr. Murit of New Hampshire.

With the opening of the Smithfield Academy certain marked changes were made in the rules and hours as they had prevailed in the Smithfield schools. No fixed limit was placed on the size of the school, the daily sessions were reduced to one a day, and that of six to eight hours duration, and last the annual vacation was extended to three months. Dr. Purdie laments the last of these changes as "the worst," while all "perhaps held in doubtful propriety by old fogies" were approved by "Young America."

## Other Schools in Smithfield

In addition to the Gordon School and its successors through the Smithfield Academy there were other schools in Smithfield. About 1820 The Honorable Archibald Atkinson established another first class school for "females only." Miss Stillman, a talented Northern lady, was employed by Mr. Atkinson as instructress of his daughter, and a few other girls of the Town were permitted to be instructed in this school in the home of the Smithfield citizen. When Miss Stillman, because of her health, was forced to leave Smithfield, she recommended to Mr. Atkinson and interested Smithfield

residents the name of Mrs. Julia Hayden of Norwich, Connecticut.

## The Oak Grove Academy

Mr. Atkinson wrote to Mrs. Hayden in the Fall of 1825, telling her of the prospects for a school in Smithfield. He wrote that while he had only one child, a daughter of nine, that he believed that a school of from fifteen to twenty small girls could be formed. The writer guaranteed a reasonable compensation for her services and suggested that she give Smithfield a trial.

Mrs. Hayden came to Smithfield in January 1826 and opened a school for girls. At the time of her arrival the education of girls consisted mainly of reading, writing and arithmetic "to the rule of three," and a little grammar. Many girls were not even taught to write their names or read in their Bibles.

After teaching a few years Mrs. Hayden moved her school probably from the residence of Mr. Atkinson to Institute Street and called the school "Oak Grove Academy for Young Ladies." Here the school grew in size and popularity and the boarding houses of Smithfield were filled with out-of-town students. Mrs. Hayden was assisted by her sister, Miss Binham, in the duties of the school.

Five years after opening her school in Smithfield, Mrs. Hayden was married to a citizen of the Town, Mr. S. White and turned her academy into a boarding school.

The Oak Grove Academy, sometimes known as Mrs. Hayden's

School, or Mrs. White's School, ran until 1854 when it was closed because of the age and physical infirmities of Mrs. White.

## The Oak Grove Academy's Curriculum

A catalog of the "Oak Grove Academy for Young Ladies" was issued in 1840, one hundred and twenty-three years ago. This catalog says: "This institution has been in successful operation for fifteen years and while it will continue under the superintendence of Mrs. White, she will have associated with her, her son, B. B. Hayden."

The program of studies mentioned in the catalog included for the first division of the junior class: orthography and orthoepy; ancient and modern geography; elementary history, general, ancient and modern history, history of the United States, history of England; arithmetic, mental and written; outlines of chemistry and natural philosophy; for the second division of the junior class, in addition to the branches usually taught, history of Rome and history of France; Roman antiquities and mythology; logic and moral philosophy. The first division of the senior class was to study: composition, etymology, algebra, chemistry with lectures and scientific classbook, intellectual philosophy, human philosophy and conchology. The second division of the senior class was responsible for: astronomy with lectures; Burnitt's Geography of the Heavens; botany with lectures; geometry and plane

trigonometry; meteorology lectures; Biblical literature, Paley's Natural Theology, and Paley's Evidences Lectures.

Tuition charges for the ten months term ranged from $25.00 in the first division of the junior class to $40.00 in the second division of the senior class with extra charges for drawing and painting of five dollars a term. Private tuition was offered in Latin, Greek, French or music at "customary rates."

Students at the Oak Grove Academy edited a school paper called "The Oak Leaf," a copy of which is now in the Hayden family.

## The Finney School

Dr. Purdie also recalled another type of school conducted in Smithfield between 1840 and 1860. This school was a type called "mixed" schools because they admitted both small boys and small girls. He mentions Miss Susan Veile, Miss L. Drew, Mrs. Martha Annet, Miss E. P. Purdie, and the Misses Finney as conductors of these schools. The last one of these schools before the War Between the States was the Finney School which suspended with the outbreak of the War. After the war the Misses Finney opened a successful boarding school in nearby Suffolk. There the school was known as the Finney Female Boarding School.

## Smithfield Schools During the War

The dark days of 1861 brought lawyers and sheriffs to the schoolrooms of Smithfield as educational interests yielded to the calls of defense. Mr. Archibald Atkinson, who had interested himself in bringing a school to Smithfield thirty years before, and then over seventy years of age, opened a school in his law office at Smithfield and taught the small boys of the Town. Mr. James B. Whitehead, whom Dr. Purdie characterized as "a man of strong mind, retentive memory and extensive reading" and who had served as constable and sheriff, also opened a school for boys in his residence near Smithfield. Both of these war time teachers were prominent men prior to the War. Mr. Archibald Atkinson was a lieutenant in the company of Hamilton Shields in the War of 1812; he had served as Commonwealth Attorney for the County of Isle of Wight; had represented the County in the House of Delegates; the District as Senator in the Virginia Assembly; and the Congressional district in Congress; he died February 1872. Mr. James B. Whitehead was sheriff of Isle of Wight County for thirty years; forty years before the War, he had another school in Smithfield.

## After the War

Mr. Samuel W. Goodson opened a classical school for boys and girls in Smithfield after the War. This school continued five or six years during which time he was assisted by Col.

E. W. Morrison, later to become the first division superintendent of Isle of Wight County Public Schools. When Mr. Goodson retired and moved to Richmond he was succeeded by Col. Morrison.

## Schools Out of Smithfield

Dr. Purdie in his History of Education in Isle of Wight County confined his subject to the schools for the most part in the Town of Smithfield. He did write that in 1820, one Gideon Powell conducted an average country school at Red Point about two miles from Town, but now within the corporate limits of Smithfield. He also mentions a Miss Cunningham who had a school for girls on a farm owned by Mr. William F. Jordan not far from Smithfield. This school was in existence in the 1830-1840 period and cared for the community girls as well as a few boarding students.

The history of the schools in Smithfield from 1790 to 1870 indicates the interest of the people of that part of Isle of Wight had in education. There were private schools serving the demands of the population for some schooling. Gradually these schools were expanding their courses of study and advanced subject matter was being offered. Schools such as the Walton School and the Smithfield Academy were established by subscription raised by the citizens. Provision was made not only for the boys of the community, but, through the establishment of such schools as the Oak Grove Academy and the Pinney School for the girls. Whereas as late as 1825 only a

few girls were being taught to read and write, the decade just before the outbreak of the War Between the States found the girls studying subject matter comparable to the modern high school.

No record has been handed down of the schools out of Smithfield. The Guardian Accounts in the Clerk's Office at Isle of Wight indicate, however, that such schools existed. The book for 1833-1834, for example, on page 1 gives an account of Charles Branch, orphan of Frances Branch. Items for the year 1834 show a charge of schooling and boarding, $60.00 on this account. A study of these Guardian Account Records shows many like items.

It is concluded, therefore, that the people of the County as well as those in the Town of Smithfield patronized schools of the old field type.

## The Pauper Schools

Early in the nineteenth century the State of Virginia made a move towards free education. The Virginia Assembly of 1818 appropriated a part of the revenue of the Literary Fund for the education of poor children. This Act set up in each County a local board known as the School Commissioners whose duty it was to select the poor children and place them in convenient schools and make arrangements with the teacher as to the rate of tuition. Generally three or four cents a day were paid for tuition. The cost of books and supplies also

was to be borne by allocations from the Literary Fund. Reading, writing and arithmetic were to be taught the children.

In addition to selecting the children and arranging for their teaching, the School Commissioners made annual reports to the Literary Fund Board. Reports were required giving the number of poor children in each County, the number attending school, the cost of tuition and supplies, and suggestions how the plan was working.

Isle of Wight County School Commissioners

At the Court of Quarterly Sessions for Isle of Wight County held October 1, 1821, it was ordered that Joseph W. Ballard, Thomas Smelly, Exum Eley, Parker Wills, Josiah Blount, John W. Duck, Josiah Holleman, Robert Butler, Jacob H. Duck and Nathaniel Wills be appointed School Commissioners. There were ten of these commissioners, one for each of the military districts in Isle of Wight County at that time. The personnel of the first board of school commissioners is not only interesting, but significant. Joseph W. Ballard, Jacob H. Duck and Parker Wills were members of the County Court and as such represented "the most able, honest and judicious citizens;" Josiah Holleman and Exum Eley, the latter also a sheriff of the County, were overseers of the poor in Broadwater District, now the southern part of the present Hardy District; Joseph Ballard and Jacob H. Duck were overseers of the poor in Currywaugh, now Windsor District; Parker Wills was one of the

overseers of the poor in Ragged Island District, now part of the Newport District; and Robert Butler was overseer of the poor in Smithfield District, now the northern part of Hardy District. Robert Butler also was one of the original trustees of the Smithfield Academy chartered in 1829, Joseph Ballard was a major in the 29th Virginia Infantry during the war of 1812 and Josiah Holleman and Exum Eley were lieutenants in this same command. In that the State funds were to be expanded for the poor, apparently there were sufficient overseers to look after this aspect. Robert Butler and others undoubtedly were interested in the educational aspect. The caliber of the men composing the first board of commissioners was such so as to be able to handle the few dollars for the best interest of the poor children of the County.

The Order Book of 1830 gives the names of the following ten men forming the Isle of Wight School Commissioners for that year; Jacob H. Duck, Augustus Ballard, Exum Eley, Thomas Smelly, John W. Duck, Willis H. Woodley, Josiah Holleman, Robert Butler, Samuel P. Jordan, and Willis Williams. Of these it will be noted that Augustus Ballard, Willis H. Woodley, Samuel P. Jordan and Willis Williams were changes from 1821. Col. Willis H. Woodley was one of the original trustees of the Smithfield Academy and in 1830 presumedly still on that Board. Col. Woodley also had been Chairman of the building committee of the Smithfield Academy. Therefore on the 1830 School

Commissioners were two of the Smithfield Academy trustees, Col. Woodley and Mr. Butler. In the following year the name of Merit Womble appears in place of Robert Butler, this being the only change.

Fourteen commissioners were listed for the year 1843; James M. Jordan, Jacob H. Duck, Augustus Ballard, David Roberts, John P. Thomas, John R. Purdie, Josiah Holleman, Irvin W. Duck, James P. Jordan, Monroe Clements, Lucien E. M. Wills, Mills Darden, John Phillips, and Arthur Channell. John R. Purdie, one of the 1843 commissioners, was a prominent physician of Smithfield, a man interested in education, and the author of a sketch on the History of Isle of Wight Education.

The first reference to school districts by number was in 1850. That year the School Commissioners were named by districts which were numbered:

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| District No. 1 | James P. Jordan |
| District No. 2 | Jas. B. Whitehead |
| District No. 3 | Lucien E. M. Wills |
| District No. 4 | Mills W. Darden |
| District No. 5 | Meredith H. Watkins |
| District No. 6 | Irvin W. Duck |
| District No. 7 | John M. Holland |
| District No. 8 | Benjamin Chapman |
| District No. 9 | Albert G. Moody |
| District No. 10 | William M. Crocker |

Jas. B. Whitehead, who had conducted a school near Smithfield, about 1830, and later during the War Between the North and South, appears on the Board of School Commissioners for 1850. Albert G. Moody of District No. 9 was also designated as Superintendent of Schools. A minute of his qualifying

for the office was entered in the Order Book of 1850. In connection with the school office, it may be stated that Monroe Clements qualified as Superintendent in 1843 and probably held this office until he was succeeded by Superintendent Moody in 1850. Mr. Moody held office until the time of his death in 1860 at which time Thomas J. Clements qualified. These three men seemed to have been the only superintendents of schools in Isle of Wight County under the administration of the Board of School Commissioners.

By 1857 Edwin P. Womble had succeeded Benjamin Chapman of District No. 8; Jesse A. Parker had succeeded James P. Jordan in District No. 1; and William H. Darden was in place of Mills W. Darden in District No. 4.

With the outbreak of the War in 1861 the Commissioners were: Willis J. Bunkley, Jas. B. Whitehead, Lucien E. M. Wills, William H. Darden, Meredith Watkins, Irving Duck, J. M. Holland, Edwin P. Womble, J. H. Cofer, and William M. Crocker.

The organization of the Board of School Commissioners called for a Clerk of the Board and a Treasurer. The Order Book shows that John W. Duck was Clerk in 1830 and that Joseph Holleman was Treasurer. Both of these men were Commissioners.

## Reports of Commissioners

In 1827 the Second State Auditor's Report of the Literary Fund and the Proceedings of the School Commissioners shows that Isle of Wight County had eighteen schools participating in the

Literary Fund. The Isle of Wight Commissioners for that year reported a poor census of one hundred and fifty children, fifty of which were schooled with State money. A total of $440.27 was expended on the fifty poor children. It should be noted that eighteen schools had one or more of these children for whom a tuition of four cents a day was paid out of State school funds. The average school would have had less than three pupils. It is therefore concluded that these schools were being conducted in communities with patrons willing and able to pay out of their pockets for running the schools, and the State paying for the indigent pupils. The eight or ten men composing the Board of Commissioners had only fifty children to educate. One hundred of the poor children apparently did not attend school.

The report of 1833 showed a poor census of three hundred and fifty children. That year one hundred and ninety-eight children were reported attending the twenty-nine Isle of Wight County schools participating in the State fund. That year the Commissioners expended on the almost two hundred children, $375.46. Note that in six years the number of poor children had increased two hundred, and the number of poor children being schooled, from fifty to one hundred and ninety-eight.

Twenty-four participating schools were reported in 1837 with one hundred and sixty-nine poor children whose tuition of four cents a day was paid by the State. The School

Commissioners this year did not report the census of poor children in Isle of Wight County.

The number of participating schools went up to twenty-six in 1843, but the number of poor children for whom tuition was paid dropped to one hundred and fifty-nine. On these the School Commissioners spent $298.68.

In 1844 Isle of Wight County was listed as a County in which a majority of the schools were in operation for nine months or more. Twenty-one schools were reported in which one hundred and fifty-six poor children attended at a cost of four cents a day paid from the Literary Fund. The local School Commissioners reported a poor children's census of two hundred. The cost of tuition was given $519.93.

## Significant Reports of the Isle of Wight Commissioners

**As early as 1827 the School Commissioners of Isle of Wight County reported that the indigent children in the schools progressed as well as other children, indicating that the poor children were being taught by the same teachers as others in the schools.**

The attitude of the early School Commissioners of Isle of Wight County was well expressed in the following quotation from their 1827 report:

> "A kind of false pride which has heretofore prevailed is nearly done away, and the parents of the children who are objects of the institution,

> have become anxious to have their children sent to school when one can be found convenient. In some parts of the County it is difficult and sometimes impossible to have a school, owning to the indigent state of a large part of the inhabitants, when if the sum alloted to the County were larger, it would enable the Commissioners to employ teachers in those parts of the County, whereby much good would be derived, not only to the poorest class of people, but by the middle class who are not so poor as to be proper objects of the law for establishing primary schools; yet they are not in affluent circumstances enough to board their children convenient to the most common schools in the County."

In 1827 the Commissioners further stated that because of the inconvenience in certain parts of the County in making the schools inaccessible to the people, both the poor and the middle class were growing up in ignorance. They expressed fear that unless these conditions were removed that both classes would continue to grow up in ignorance.

These men sensed one of the general objectives of modern public education when they wrote in the same report:

> "The removal of said difficulties would be the means of making good and useful members of society."

These Commissioners of 1827 also sensed that the great support for the public schools of Virginia must come from the great middle class of the people.

In the suggestions made by the Isle of Wight School Commissioners in 1833, it was stated that $1000.00 additional could be spent by the State of Virginia for the tuition of poor children in Isle of Wight County. The hope was also

expressed that the Legislature of Virginia in its discretion would appropriate as much thereof as might seem sufficient to remove existing difficulties and more fully "effect the great and noble institution of education."

The reports of the Commissioners in 1837 and again in 1843 did not give the information as to the number of poor children in the County. The omission of the figures of this census leads one to believe that the Isle of Wight Commissioners were not in sympathy with the "poor census," and while they were compelled to report the number of indigents in the schools, they deliberately refused to give the poor census. Also it is to be noted that when the poor census was given for Isle of Wight County it was given each time in rounded numbers, indicating the number was estimated. Undoubtedly finding out what families considered themselves indigent must have been quite a problem. This presumption, that the Isle of Wight omission in not reporting the poor census was purposeful, is strengthened by parts of written reports discussed later.

Isle of Wight Commissioners in 1845 reported that when the children from seven to sixteen were unable to pay their own tuition they were sent to school without regard to sex and that funds for that year from the Literary Fund were sufficient to care for the tuition of all the children who could be secured to attend school.

The report again repeated the statement that the children sent to school by the Commissioners improved as fast as other children.

Teachers in the schools were characterized as "generally of good moral character and qualifications."

In 1849 the Isle of Wight Commissioners considered the children of parents unable to educate them as coming under the term "indigent" as used in the poor school law. Children between the ages of eight and sixteen were generally sent to school without any regard to sex, the school funds at that time being ample for both. Comment again was made that:

> "The poor children sent to school improve generally as others do, who go to the same schools."

As to the teachers, the Commissioners reported that no examination was given to test their qualifications, but that they were believed to be "as good as could be obtained to teach for the low price."

It will be observed that the 1848 school officials of Isle of Wight were placing a liberal interpretation on the word indigent. Considering children of parents unable to educate them as being entitled to education at the expense of the State was another step towards public free education in Isle of Wight and other counties of Virginia.

Dr. Purdie's Criticism of Sectarian High Schools

Although Dr. Purdie was a School Commissioner for one

of the districts of Isle of Wight County in 1843, and was in position to judge the experiment Virginia was making in educating children by use of the Literary Fund, he makes no reference in his sketch of the history of education in Isle of Wight County to the use of State funds to school poor children. It is to be thought that Dr. Purdie was of the conservative type, especially when he had passed the age of seventy and composed his recollections of the schools of Smithfield. The concluding paragraphs of his history relate some of the changes that had come about in his time, changes not in accord with his ideas of education:

> "A question of grave importance suggests itself. Have the many sectarian high schools (so called) which since the War have been strown broadcast over Virginia, when viewed from the standpoint of domestic economy, been a public benefit? Can any other answer by truthfully given than that it is very doubtful if any solid benefit has been generally derived from these so called institutions of learning, when the heavy expenses incurred, frequently beyond the means of the patrons are considered with the passion for extravagance in dress, jewelry and costly display so often acquired - the aversion to all physical employments and all mental occupations save the reading of novelettes or worse light literature- the neglect of special domestic duties and no prerequisite for household affairs - only playing the piano, dancing the German and knocking croquet balls, can be so classified - when such habits as, the legitimate heralds of idleness, prodigality and indifference to the prosperity of our homes are implanted on the minds of maturing females; I ask with trembling suspense, can we expect them to become mothers of such men as filled the Confederate ranks in our late civil revolt? This question demands a prompt reply--its decision is incumbent on the parents,

> guardians and public authorities of the State. Rather than my daughter should be an alumna of some such colleges she should receive only the learning to be obtained around the family hearth."

Dr. Purdie was directing his criticism apparently to the education of girls. From the time of the arrival of Mrs. Hayden in Smithfield "when only a few girls could read their Bibles or write their names" to the "beginning of sectarian (so called) high schools" many changes had taken place to bring about an emancipation of girls from a slavery of illiteracy.

In this period, 1790-1861, a more extensive curriculum for both boys and girls were strengthened; more attention was being paid to the qualification of teachers; and people were raising the question why some children should be educated at the expense of the State and others compelled to pay their own tuition. The method of tuition only for the indigents was under fire. Isle of Wight County was being prepared for the next step in public free education.